

“It does not take a majority to prevail... but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.” -Samuel Adams

2013
OCTOBER
ISSUE 9

Rogue Valley Community Press

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Medford teachers fight for future

BY JASON HOUK

Lori Ross has been teaching for 30 years. As a teacher she has seen many ups and downs and while not complaining, “the last 10 years have been tough.” Ross has much to worry about, as a 5th grade teacher at Wilson Elementary and organizer for the Medford Education Association. The teachers of the Medford Education Association and Medford School District have been unable to resolve their differences while bargaining on the latest teacher contracts. Currently, the Medford teachers are working without a contract and as negotiations fail to move forward, the future is less and less certain.

The Medford teachers’ are asking for cost-of-living adjustments and protection of pay and benefits as well as protecting their voice in the workplace and maintaining a 40-hour work week. The district offers a modest pay increase but changes the way that teachers time is managed and the way accreditations are considered for salary. The offer is available on the district’s website at medford.k12.or.us. “What they are calling a pay raise is not a pay raise.” laments Catherine Brasseur, a 4th grade teacher at Howard Elementary. On top of the 36 students she is responsible for, Brasseur is working towards a fair contract for her future and the future of education in the Rogue Valley. The district’s proposal would raise teachers’ salaries by 6 percent this school year and by 1 percent in each of the next two years, but according to Brasseur, when taking into consideration the increase in school days, decreases in benefits, increased taxes and past sacrifices, the average Medford teacher would actually be taking a cut in pay. Teachers would be looking at a “couple hundred dollars less and more work.” explains Brasseur. “Tell me how this is a pay increase.” If Medford teachers accept the contract they could expect to lose anywhere from a couple hundred dollars to several thousand dollars annually.

During the economic recession

TEACHERS, 7

Oregon Legislature passes ‘Oregon’s Monsanto Protection Act’

BY JASON HOUK

To the dismay of many organic and environmental groups, a controversial agriculture bill that prevents counties in Oregon from regulating genetically modified (GM) crops has been signed into law. Senate Bill 863, the “Certainty for Family Farmers of Oregon Act”, prohibits local county or city regulation of genetically modified plants and prevents local governments from enacting or enforcing any measures which regulate agricultural, flower, nursery and vegetable seeds or their products. The bill precludes current efforts in Oregon counties to restrict GM agriculture, but excludes Jackson County, which already has a GM ban up for vote. The bill also includes an emergency clause, which allows

the bill to go into effect immediately, precluding opponents from referring the bill to voters. The legislation was part of Governor Kitzhaber’s “Grand Bargain”, a package of five bills passed during the recent special session aimed at giving schools more money, freezing college tuitions, and reining in escalating costs of the public pension system. “This bill comes at the expense of local communities and farmers concerned about the lack of transparency and effective oversight of genetically engineered crops and foods at the state and federal levels, and takes away their ability to protect their right to farm, and the right to know what’s in their food, through local government action,” said Ivan Maluski, director of Friends of Family Farmers.



Around 200 Jackson County residents joined to march for Food Freedom in Medford in solidarity with GMO-Free rallies across the nation.

Photo Credit:
GMO Free Jackson County

Environmental groups and local food activists are upset that this bill was part of this legislative package. According to the Center for Food Safety, after dying in committee during the regular session, the bill was pushed into the special session at the behest of industrial agriculture and out-of-state chemical companies, and is a model bill from the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). “It is incredibly disappointing that the Oregon Legislature has voted today to take away the rights of Oregonians to establish local food and agriculture ordinances intended to protect the viability of local farms, food and agriculture.” laments Maluski, “This legislation is a clear giveaway to a handful of

LEGISLATION, 4

Am I my brother’s keeper? Who pays for health care for the undeserving?

BY SAMUEL METZ, MD

My brother-in-law Max has smoked since he was 12 years old. Now he’s turning 40 and hates the miserable habit. His many efforts to quit reduced his three-pack a day habit to one, but he still can’t kick the addiction. Meanwhile, his many years of low-paying jobs, if they offered any benefits at all, provided him only with high-deductible health insurance he couldn’t afford to use. He hadn’t seen a physician in years. But last month he went to the emergency room with a hacking cough that kept him awake for two nights running. The ER people gave him three pieces of bad news: (1) he’s got an advanced lung cancer requiring an operation he can’t afford, (2) the only hospital that will admit him is the county hospital funded with tax dollars, and (3) the multi-hundred dollar emergency room bill is more than he can pay. **Question:** Should we spend our hard-earned tax dollars on Max’s operation? Or should Max go without health care because, after all, his bad decisions had allowed the disease to go undetected for so long and caused the cancer in the first place?



Members of Health Care for All Oregon - Rogue Valley, march in Ashland’s 2013 Pride Parade. The mission of HCAO is to create a comprehensive, equitable, publicly funded, high quality, universal health care system serving everyone in Oregon and the United States.

It’s a question that goes to the heart of our health care crisis. Should we reduce health care costs by excluding the undeserving? If we don’t squander dollars on them, we liberate billions for us solid citizens who earned our right to health care. Why should everyone have that right? This bandwagon has powerful emotional and logical appeal, but it rumbles over the speed

bumps of reality. Before we hop on board, consider these points. First, perhaps our intuition tells us who deserves health care (i.e., we and our families) and who doesn’t (people with self-inflicted illnesses). But ultimately, who can be entrusted to decide? What if people in charge exclude us and our families because we pay fewer taxes than they do, drink or smoke more than they do, or

weigh more than they do? Who do we want to determine if our families get health care? The bandwagon just headed down a very slippery slope. Second, Oregonians already pay enough to provide comprehensive health care for every one of us, even the “undeserving.” Our problem is not insufficient funds, but who handles our health care dollars. Right now, Americans filter \$850 billion through our private health insurance industry. Of that, at least \$350 billion is lost to administration before it ever turns into health care. That’s a lot of lost money. In fact, it’s more than Americans spend on obesity and tobacco-related diseases combined. It’s seven times what we spend on health care for all immigrants, documented or otherwise. It’s more money than the US spends on all drugs and medications. And, importantly, it’s more money than we need to extend comprehensive health care to every one of us. Oregon is no different. If Oregonians diverted what we currently spend on health care

KEEPER, 9

Editorials & Opinion

Dear readers

Letter from the Editor

Lately I find myself drawn to walking and driving down B Street in Ashland as often as I can, because all of a sudden its fall and several trees in that neighborhood are particularly beautiful. I'd say that they are red, but that does not do them justice. Back when we were kids, we lived for getting brand new crayons and if we were really lucky they came in a bright yellow Crayola box, 64 of them, with a sharpener built in. I look at those trees daily and think that even though there are plenty of man-made shades of red like the ones I once treasured in those yellow boxes, nothing comes close to the breathtaking hues that are on display on B Street. Every time I see them, it feels like I am seeing them again for the first time and I am in awe of how magical nature is. Are you watching the trees too?

Another thing that I'm hyper aware of this time of year is that the cooling temperatures mean that struggling local families more often rely on our area food banks to help make ends meet. Having to choose between heating and eating is something that far too many folks are experiencing. With energy rate increases pinching the pocketbooks of our neighbors, it is no wonder that the lines at the food banks continue to increase. Traditionally this time of the

year donations are way down and the food banks are unable to meet the needs of those who visit them. During summer we are fortunate that many donations come in from local farms and family gardens and later in the year, food drives will increase as we get closer to the holidays. But right now shelves are empty. Both the Ashland Emergency Food Bank and the Seventh Day Adventist Church's Food Bank have reported shortages. Food is one of the most basic human needs and if we all work together we can make things better for those who can use a little help. Will you please consider filling up a bag or two from your own pantry or going out of your way a little bit this month to buy a few food items for those who have less? The Ashland Emergency Food Bank is open Monday through Friday from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and on the first Saturday of each month (same hours). They are located at 560 Clover Lane in Ashland. Seventh Day Adventist hosts a weekly food pantry every Wednesday from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM and they are located at 1650 Clark Ave.

On a personal note, October marks the beginning of our third year publishing (starting with our premiere issue of the Ashland Free Press in October

2011). Traditionally we kick off the month with our annual zombie walk and this year's walk was moved to October 29th at 5:30 PM. What on earth is a zombie walk? In short, it's an excuse to dress up like zombies and it's one of the events that we plan that is popular with younger people in general, but zombies of all ages are invited. We will meet at the grassy area front of the Ashland Library and walk to the plaza. This is our 4th Annual Zombie Walk and we encourage you all to dress up and join in the fun. For the first time we are making it a benefit for the Ashland Food Banks mentioned above. It is a free event, but we ask that if you can afford to, please bring 5 cans or boxes of non-perishable food to donate. And as always, thank you to our readers, advertisers, subscribers and supporters. You inspire us more than you know.

Kindly,
Vanessa Houk

Did you know that Binney & Smith, the makers of Crayola crayons currently produce 120 different colors of crayons and 23 of those colors are shades of red?

Letter to the Editor

BY DUANE SAMPLE

I do not like to find fault with people who mean well by writing about a particular subject: especially in a fledgling paper like your RVC Press. But I must complain about this article by one Jason Gettel: *Working but stuck in poverty.* (September 2013)

Why my complaint about an otherwise well-written article? Because no money-amounts were mentioned in the entire subject of the article! How much real income per month or year are we reading/talking about? This lack of real money

information is typical of government employed jargon. Is that why this writer does not talk about real money - weekly/monthly/annually - because it is "secretive"? Or worse: classified information? Or even worse: "We The People" must guess what the value signified as poverty is? Please, lets be real. Not the typical government-style bull! Thank you in advance if you clarify this article into reality.

I would really like to know if I am living in poverty or if I am not.

Thank you and Godspeed
Duane Sample

Theatre views

BY HUGH GARRETT

There is a saying in theatre that there are never more than two men on earth that can play King Lear. If so, one of them is Denis Arndt. Newcomers to Ashland will not know Arndt, but the old timers remember productions starring Arndt that placed OSF into world wide arena of theatre among the best of London and New York.

After work in film and other theatres, Arndt is rumored to be back, and playing Prospero in The Tempest this coming season at OSF. Let's hope it's true and that the play runs from February to October, so we can see The Tempest many times. Arndt takes performance and theatre to its primary purpose – to present the human condition head on.

In The Tempest there are the young lovers, wonderful characters, and a bitter sweet theme of the cruelty and injustice of the world for the dispossessed. The role of Prospero is the opposite of King Lear. Prospero is a king as much at peace with himself as one as self aware can be. He is wise about the world for what it is, not what he would like it to be.

Prospero has given his daughter all. He has educated her to return to "real" life fully human and royal. Prospero has slain his dragons and passed onto the far more difficult feat in mortality of total forgiveness. His farewell speech to life, the all inclusive "Our revels now are ended," is also considered Shakespeare's goodbye to theatre and a lesser world. Many playwrights, including the giants like Tom Stoppard, are stuck writing about Now. Another great Brit playwright David Hare took to writing political monologues and presenting them on stage as an attempt at now. Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, may still be the best play written about America then and now.

In the race to the cover

of American Theatre Mag. "revolutionary" theatre at OSF has included swearing, pissing, vomiting, and masturbating on stage, as well as the rare vision of two blacks enslaving a white (about time). Let's not forget all the transvestites and gay love, we've been witness too, force fed our politically correct spinach.

OSF supporters have been deluged with costumes upstaging the play, sets unnecessarily overdone, and giant concepts that tower the production. But Shakespeare wins every time. The plays surpass every attempt to minimize or dumb them down. The Bard remains the most revolutionary, politically correct writer of this or any time. He is a rascal no one can encompass.

Meanwhile, where is the play about black life now? Where is the play about women now? Where is the Merchant of Venice in Nazi Germany? Where is the all black Shakespeare with whites as servants? For over four hundred years no one but Shakespeare has proved more conclusively that life changes but the human condition remains the same.

Will Arndt's return to OSF encourage even more first rate theatre based on great acting, a clear story, a reverence for words? We need young actors who know what they are saying. If they understand Shakespeare, we will. Why not a one paragraph simple synopsis of the Shakespeare play before curtain? Will OSF get back to better classical and contemporary work that moves us closer into the future of the heart of Now?

Note: Some great plays on film through Netflix are: Ralph Richardson and Kate Hepburn in Eugene O'Neill's LONG DAYS JOURNEY INTO NIGHT. Joseph Cotton and Kathryn Hepburn in Edward Albee's A DELICATE BALANCE. Vanessa Redgrave in Carson McCuller's THE BALLAD OF SAD CAFÉ.

Hugh Garret resides in Ashland

Your Social Justice News Resource

The Rogue Valley Community Press (RVCP) is a publication for the working class and a platform for marginalized voices in our community. Through RVCP, we aim to educate people about social justice issues and inspire them to create positive change. Published monthly, RVCP is available through subscription, local retail locations, and street vendors.

Contributions from the community are welcome, including articles, letters to the editor, short poetry, and photography. Send submissions to editor@rvcommunitypress.com. All writing accepted for publication will be edited with due respect for the author's intent. Opinions expressed in RVCP are those of the authors, and not necessarily the editors.

RVCP is a proud member of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA). Contributions to RVCP may be reprinted in other NASNA member publications.

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Applause & Hiss



Life

First flying car may go on sale in 2015

More than 80 elephants have been killed for their ivory by poachers who used cyanide to poison a water hole in Zimbabwe’s largest game park. Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi confirmed the toll in September after touring Hwange National Park.

Wildlife department officials said the chemical also killed smaller animals and predators which feed on them.

Nine poachers were arrested after rangers tracked them to a cache of ivory hidden in the park.

“When we left Hwange National Park on Sunday, the total number of elephants that had died from cyanide poisoning was 81,” Jerry Gotora, a director of the Zimbabwe parks department, told AFP.

“Several other animals have also died, but we don’t have the total number yet.”

The elephant death toll includes more than 40 elephants discovered following a poisoning incident in the 4,650-sq km (1,795-square mile) national park earlier this month.

There has been a rise in the killing of elephants and rhinos in parts of Africa in recent years, mostly to feed demand for horns and tusks in Asia.

via BBC

Nearly 700 rhinos have been killed in South Africa in 2013, making it the bloodiest year yet for rhino poaching.

Last year, a record 668 rhinos were poached for their horns, but that figure has already been eclipsed with the deaths of 688 rhinos with three months left of the year, figures from the South African government show. There are around 18,000 white and 4,000 black rhinos in the country.

The dramatic growth in rhino

poaching in South Africa, up from just 13 in 2007, has largely been driven by demand in Asia, in particular Vietnam, where rhino horn is seen as a status symbol. A survey of 720 people in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, published earlier this month, found that typical buyers were “educated, successful and powerful individuals” and use rhino horn as currency in networking.

Anti-poaching efforts are turning to technology, such as drones, as well as attempting to elevate the problem from a conservation to a national security issue. In the next fortnight, the US will crush its 6m tonne stockpile of seized ivory in a symbolic act of destruction to raise awareness of the problem.

via The Guardian

For the first time in history, 9 out of 10 children in the world go to school according to the United Nations.

World leaders are meeting in New York today to talk about the fight against extreme poverty, thirteen years into one of the UN’s most ambitious plans known as the Millennium Development Goals.

The blueprint sets out a series of 8 targets – each with specific deadlines – in a bid to tackle some of the most preventable problems across the world.

At the meeting today, the UN will hear that some of the goals are on target to be met – particularly in the areas of food, water and education – while others are lagging behind.

The UN says there is now parity in enrolment levels between boys and girls, two years ahead of its 2015 deadline. Almost 90 per cent of people now have access to safe drinking water, while some 200 million

people living in urban slums now have better living conditions.

UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon said that while some of the achievements are impressive, “much more needs to be done”.

The umbrella group of Ireland’s development NGOs Dóchas said the UN report shows that aid “very definitely works”.

“At the same time, it also shows that the progress on [the final goal - creating a global partnership for development], which is the responsibility of the West, is falling short,” said Hans Zomer, the director of Dóchas.

“The Millennium Development Goals are a partnership, a contract. We cannot expect the goals to be reached if not all parties are sticking to the agreement.”

The decades-old dream of Thunderball fans could be a reality as early as next summer after The Martin Aircraft Company said it hoped to have a model on the market within 10 months.

The jetpack will be able to soar to 7,000 feet and hit speeds of 50mph. “Think of it like a motorcycle in the sky,” Peter Coker, Martin chief executive, told the Wall Street Journal.

The other problem is the price - at \$150,000, it’s certainly not cheap. But that hasn’t put off thousands of adrenaline junkies. “We have more than 10,000 people who have actually enquired as to where they might be able to purchase these in the future,” Mr Coker added.

Martin has received clearance to conduct manned test flights, planning to market the jetpack to the emergency services and Army while developing a lighter version for private use.

BY KIM LUCES
GMA NEWS

In two years time, we may see flying cars hovering over our skies. The first model for mass production and use may then be available in the market, according to a report.

A flying car called the Transition, of the Massachusetts-based firm Terrafugia, is designed to be driven both on the road and in the skies. It will go on sale in 2015, the same report said.

It’s designed for pilots who want to be able to drive their planes home instead of parking them at the airport.

Transition is “part sedan, part private jet with two seats” with four wheels and wings that fold up when driven like a car, the report said. The release of the Transition is a prototype for another car-plane hybrid that is designed to be used by the masses, called the TF-X.

“We do want to create a flying car that can be used by a much broader segment of the population than just the pilot communities today,” said Terrafugia CEO Carl Dietrich in a Reuters video report.

If the project pushes through, the TF-X model by Terrafugia will have a range of 500 miles and a cruising speed of 200 miles per hour if the concept does push through. The “flying car for the masses” will not require an operator with a pilot’s license since it will take off, fly, and land autonomously.

The operator only needs to input a program that tells the vehicle where to go. Dietrich



said that most planes in the present already have a sophisticated autopilot program.

“These vehicles that need to basically be able to fly themselves need to know where every other aircraft is in the air space, they need to know where the weather fronts are that they need to avoid, they need to know restricted airspace pops up, so they need to be tied in to basically a data network,” Dietrich said.

Such a network has yet to be developed. But Dietrich said that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been making great strides recently towards developing that network and he is confident a system would be up and running when the TF-X is ready to take to the skies.

However, there is still the danger of the system shutting down. Once that happens, the operator can pull a handle that deploys a rocket-deployed parachute system that brings the car down safely.

This system has already been applied to the Transition model.



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A creative proposal

BY CATIE FARYL

The Sovereignty Seed Company is part of my on-going personal effort to expose through art and writing the dangers of GMOs, unmitigated climate change, and lack of jobs and alternative energy development. It is a small business I started as a conceptual art happening that could become the core of a boycott to encourage consumers to stop buying all seeds produced by Monsanto, Syngenta and their subsidiaries and alert Jackson County voters to the dire need to ban GMOs. Via this open letter I am proposing the idea that the region known as "State of Jefferson" becomes a "District of Resource". I believe our region is truly "the last stand" where people will finally come together to champion Planet Earth and Mother Nature. In the center of this region is Jackson and Josephine Counties, where 90% of the world's non GMO beet and chard seeds and 50% of the world's non GMO food seeds are grown. This is why the Rogue Valley is Ground Zero in the battle for seed sovereignty, food security and community and individual rights. The groundwork has been laid to make this the perfect home to a new kind of leadership. "Jefferson" (which is roughly delineated as Redding to the south, Roseburg to the north, the eastern California and Oregon borders to the east, and the Pacific Ocean coast of Northern California and Southern Oregon to the west) makes more sense now than any other time in the past. Instead of ambitions to secede from the Union, I am promoting the idea of abandoning the struggles of rehashing the past and add something brand new to the Constitution. As Washington D.C. is a center for government and politics, creating a District of Resource in our Western region would be a center for job

Legislation

CONTINUED FROM 1

out-of-state agrochemical companies like Monsanto, Syngenta and others and does nothing to protect Oregon farmers from the increasing risks of cross-contamination with genetically engineered material." Essentially, the act prevents counties and municipalities from banning GM crops. The Oregon Farm Bureau claims that this is because it does not want local governments to be able to elevate some farming practices over others. "A patchwork of regulations across the state is bad for our agriculture economy. Oregon's farmers need certainty," said Rep. Mike McLane (R - Powell Butte) the House Republican Leader. The measure exempts Jackson County, which had already qualified a ballot measure for 2014. If the Jackson County measure fails, however, the county would no longer be exempt. GM crops threaten local farmers because the pollen from GMs cross-pollinate with local organic crops. Cross pollination of GM crops to organic crops leads to contamination of both

produce and seeds, leading to monetary losses for organic companies and family farms, as well as unreliable organic produce for consumers. As a result, local farmers are unable to sell their crops or use their own seeds. Local retailers such as the Ashland Food Coop and Market of Choice will not have local suppliers for their organic products. Oregon is the country's fifth highest organic producer, and is home to some of the country's main organic seed companies. In in Rogue Valley, thousands of dollars of lucrative seed crops have already been plowed under by organic growers in order to protect their certification and market reputation from pollution by gene drift from GM crops. In 2012, Jackson county residents learned that a Swiss biotech company, Syngenta, had been contracting with local landowners to grow GM sugar beets on their vacant lots. Although it is illegal for Syngenta to produce GM crops in their own country, it is currently legal to produce them in Jackson County. Jackson County residents collected over 6700 signatures for a petition to ban the growing of GM crops. Measure 15-119 bans the propagating, cultivating, raising, or growing of GM crops

in Jackson County and will appear on the May 20, 2014 ballot. Governor Kitzhaber has committed to a statewide policy that prevents GM contamination of non-GM crops under existing Department of Agriculture authority by June 2014. Kitzhaber has called on a special task force to provide expert recommendations on state policy and on legislation that will be

introduced in 2015 to address liability and compensation issues related to GM contamination and consumers' right to know what's in their food. Until then, and if Measure 15-119 passes, Jackson County will be the only Oregon county where organic farming can truly thrive in a GM-free environment.

Medford seeks people for city boards, commissions, and committees

The Medford Mayor and City Council are looking for people interested in serving on City Boards, Commissions, and Committees. There are open positions on the City Budget Committee, Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and more. Application forms are available in the City Manager's Office,

Room 310, City Hall as well as on the City website at www.ci.medford.or.us. Online submittal of applications is available on the Website. Applications must be submitted by October 31, 2013. Residency in the City of Medford is a requirement for serving on most City Boards, Commissions and Committees. Additional information can be obtained by calling (541) 774-2000.

Film

GMO

Movie Night



Wednesday,
Oct. 23rd 7 PM - 9 PM
Medford Library
Carpenter Room
205 S Central Ave
in Medford

G

MO Free Jackson County will be presenting 3 short videos:
"GM Crops: Farmer to Farmer" - Farmer travels across the US interviewing farmers and other specialists about their experiences of growing GMO crops.
"Do we really need industrial agriculture to feed the world?" with Anna Lappe
Clips from a talk by Howard Vlieger, a 3rd generation Iowa farmer speaking on the effects of GMOs on our soils, farms, and the food we eat.

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"


~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Lecture

Economic & Ecological Considerations of GMOs


a talk by Ray Seidler

Wednesday
Oct. 30th
7 PM - 9 PM
Medford Library
Carpenter Room
205 S Central Ave in Medford



A

n informative talk by Ray Seidler, who was a Senior Scientist at the US Environmental Protection Agency and wrote the EPA's Biosafety Plan. With a PhD in Microbiology, Ray is very knowledgeable on the science behind GMOs. Ray presents this information in an easy-to-understand manner. There will be a Q & A following his talk. There will also be a discussion about how this information applies to Jackson County and the reasons behind Measure 15-119 to ban the cultivation of GMO crops here.




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Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932

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Occupy Medford is a local non-partisan movement in solidarity with democratic movements around the world - creating the conversations our political, financial, military and social elite won't talk about.

New Fall Meeting Times

Check the schedule online at:
www.occupymedfordoregon.org
email: occupymedford@gmail.com

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD!

Alleviating user conflict on Ashland’s bike paths and trails

BY DREW MEBANE

My 72 year-old friend has a gash on her knee the size of a serving spoon, and she has large bruises all over her back. Incredulously, she was run over by a bicyclist on the Bear Creek bike path, not far from her home. Ashland has made national news with our pedestrian/bike conflicts, thanks to our county psychiatrist (of all people) stringing high-tension wires across the fastest downhill mountain biking trail in the Ashland Creek Watershed.

I’ve seen inspiring progress into alleviating these problems on our trails, and I have a few suggestions to improve the traffic flow on our bike paths. As a bike commuter, pedestrian, and trail runner, I believe I bring a balanced perspective.

Strangely enough, Dr. Jackson Dempsey booby-trapped one of the most remote trails in our watershed, but user conflicts have been far more common on more accessible trails such as BTI, right above Lithia Park. Here’s where the Ashland Watershed & Trails Association stepped in with an exemplary solution: separate the types of trail users. The 2011 Trails Master Plan outlines numerous site-specific solutions, and the Bandersnatch trail was the first major success. The AWTa mobilized hundreds of volunteers, including bikers, to create Bandersnatch as a pedestrian-only single-track alternative to BTI.

According to Rob Cain, president of the AWTa, Bandersnatch has been “incredibly effective” at reducing user conflicts at that key point in the watershed. On the asphalt bike paths around town, I experience my share of the frustrations, both as a biker and a pedestrian. As a biker, I love stretching out my legs and getting some real



exercise. Sometimes I’m late for work, and I enjoy the effort of leaning into a hard ride.

It’s a pain to be forced to change five gears after stopping to get around the jogging duo whose earphones block my repeated summons. As a pedestrian, I get the rub, too. When my son was two, we often strolled down to the tiny Lomakatsi trail on the Bear Creek bike path. I vividly remember the panicky feeling of being on high alert so that he didn’t teeter into the path of oncoming bike traffic. Lots of bikers were very courteous, but there was a certain percentage that didn’t slow down at all, apparently trusting a toddler’s ability to stick to the right half of a path. I also remember being deep in conversation with a friend, enjoying the beauty of the sunset colors on snowy Grizzly Peak, when somebody yelled, “passing!” and made us both leap off the path in some terror, even though we weren’t in the way. So what’s a person to do? Follow Dempsey’s example and try to decapitate each other? How about continuing AWTa’s example of separating the types of trail users. In Boulder, CO, painted lanes divide popular bike paths near the university into pedestrian and bike zones, and the bike paths are also wider. But I think an easy, inexpensive solution for our bike paths

would be to maintain a three-foot strip of decomposed granite (DG) along the side of most of the existing bike paths to allow pedestrians a lane of their own. Asphalt is ugly, expensive, and not so eco-friendly, but DG is “dirt” cheap and is already there beneath the weeds beside most of the bike paths. It would also help to post complementary signage explaining the new pedestrian lane and providing guidelines for headphones, passing, and so forth.

Awareness and education are always fabulous tools so long as the proper audiences are being reached. I see companies such as Ashland Mountain Adventures doing a commendable job explaining how new bikers should communicate with other trails users on their way down the mountain. Whenever a biker passes me on a trail and says, “two more coming,” I know that somebody like AMA has helped me out. Since AMA drops bikers off at key entry points into the watershed such as the ski lodge, they have a perfect pulpit to reach a large chunk of trail users. But in town there is no single port of entry as very slow traffic merges with very fast-moving traffic every couple of hundred yards along the bike paths.

Here is where we need each other’s creativity in moving toward solutions. And we need some empathy and compassion for each other. If you’re at the top of the pecking order—traveling the fastest on the largest machine—then you, I, we all must take the highest level of responsibility. A 72 year-old is somebody’s grandmother, and a two year-old is somebody’s most cherished thing on earth. Go through the gear changes, exercise those derailleurs, take four seconds off your commute.

New health care options for Jackson County

Two health care programs are now available to the people of Jackson County. The first insurance marketplace is Cover Oregon. This plan is for the uninsured and those with private health insurance. Statewide, Oregon has a half million people uninsured. The website www.coveroregon.com will help you determine the best plan for you. You can also call toll free 1-855-268-3767.

The second program is for low-income people. It is the expanded Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan) program. It is estimated in Jackson County that 16,000 adults will be newly

eligible for Medicaid and 22,000 could be eligible for a tax credit to help pay for premiums. This week eligible Jackson County residents will receive letters with an easy check –the- boxes form. Fill out the form, mail it in and there is no need to apply through the Cover Oregon website. For further information go to <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/healthplan/Pages/fast-track.aspx>

Assistance navigating the new health insurance web sites is available through Community Health Centers Ashland -541-482-9741, Medford-541-773-3863 and La Clinica 541-535-6239.

“The phrase ‘Love one another’ is so wise. By loving one another, we invest in each other and in ourselves. Perhaps someday, when we need someone to care for us, it may not come from the person we expect, but from the person we least expect. It may be our sons or daughter-in-laws, our neighbors, friends, cousins, stepchildren, or stepparents whose love for us has assigned them to the honorable, yet dangerous position of caregiver.”
~ Peggi Speers

Proposal

CONTINUED FROM 4

generation and resource stewardship that could put our country back on track.

Because our region has the remaining untouched and protected old growth forests, the Siskiyou Monument known for its miraculous bio-diversity, vast watersheds, huge resource reserves, gold mining and other features that need to be stewarded for the good of our country. It seems the very best place to honor and build environmental protections and healthier living standards and to incubate a new economy, new beliefs and hopes for an economic revival that works in concert with and with respect for Nature and natural systems.

Washington D.C. is the location for politics and government, and our region, as a District of Resource, could

become the center for stewardship of natural resources with focus on creating jobs that are in concert with nature and projects that reclaim the commons and prevent further exploitation and waste of America’s natural resources and dependence on fossil fuels. Adding to the U.S. Constitution for this problem-solving concept with help us heal many rifts and move forward with new courage, resolve and tools for action, as opposed to get bogged down in disagreements, divisions and potentially a civil war. It is towards that purpose the Chamber of Commons is growing our national platform from the cradle of the beautiful Rogue Valley. Please friend Champions of the Commons on Facebook and consider becoming a member of the Chamber of Commons.

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News

Oregon allows debt collectors to push working families into poverty

A new report gives Oregon a “D”

VIA PRESS RELEASE

The decision of what bills to pay and what bills to put off is a game of financial roulette tens of thousands of Oregonians are forced to play every month as they struggle to recover from the economic downturn. The priorities are obvious – keep your family housed and fed and pay for transportation plus other items necessary for work – other creditors get what’s left.

A new report from the National Consumer Law Center exposes how state exemption laws take these difficult decisions out of workers hands by giving debt collectors the ability to seize a substantial portion of a person’s wages and the tools essential for their work. The report, *No Fresh Start: How States Let Debt Collectors Push Families into Poverty*, finds that Oregon law fails to meet basic standards that would allow debtors to continue to work productively to support themselves and their families.

Exemption laws are designed to protect debtors and their families from poverty, and preserve their ability to be productive members of society. Oregon gets an F when it comes to protecting wages. Current wage garnishment law allows debt collectors to push a family below the poverty level. A minimum wage earner working full time can have their weekly pay reduced to \$268.50, less than the federal poverty level for a two-person family. If they work less than full time their wages may be reduced to \$217.50, less than half of the federal poverty level for a family of four. Oregon’s overall grade is a D.

Oregon’s archaic exemption laws fuel the lucrative and fast-growing debt buyer industry. “When a worker’s wages are slashed below the poverty level to pay off old credit card debt

that was bought for pennies on the dollar by an out-of-state debt buyer, everyone loses. The debtor can’t pay the landlord or the childcare worker and the family is forced to rely on government services to make ends meet,” said Angela Martin, Executive Director of Economic Fairness Oregon, an advocacy group fighting for reform of Oregon’s debt collection laws.

“In 2012, the FTC received more than 125,000 consumer complaints about debt collection, representing almost 25% of all consumer complaints it received. Debt collection lawsuits are clogging up civil courts across the nation,” said Robert Hobbs, National Consumer Law Center’s Deputy Director and author of Fair Debt Collection. “This report serves as a wake-up call for states to update their exempt property laws and stop putting millions of families at risk. Doing so will allow local courts to redirect their focus from the insatiable appetite of a debt machine that churns out millions of undocumented debt collection lawsuits each year.”

The NCLC report includes several recommends for reforming state exemption laws, those include:

- Preserve the debtor’s ability to work, by protecting a working car, work tools and equipment.
- Protect the family’s housing, necessary household goods, and means of transportation.
- Protect a living wage for working debtors that will meet basic needs.
- Protect retirees from destitution by restricting creditors’ ability to seize retirement funds.
- Be automatically updated for inflation.

The complete report can be found at: www.nclc.org

Teachers

CONTINUED FROM 1



On Tuesday, September 24 at the Central High School administration building, around 300 parents, teachers, residents and community groups braved the rain to rally in solidarity and call on Medford School District to “Rebuild The Trust” and resume face-to-face negotiations.

in 2011, Medford teachers agreed to many sacrifices, including eight lost days, increased insurance costs and pay freezes. Since then, Medford teachers have seen no cost of living increase.

Brasseur explains “The point is they have not restored us [to pre-recession levels]... we were promised that when things got better that we would be restored.”

Another major issue of contention is changes in working conditions, increase in teacher work-load with the removal of workweek limitations.

“For many of us, the biggest issue is removing the 40-hour work week,” explains Ross. The districts current offer contains language that removes the teachers 40-hour work week. Although teachers are salaried employees, they workload is tied to a traditional 40-hour work schedule. The districts current contract offer would do away with this limit, requiring more work during teacher’s personal time.

“I don’t know any teacher that works a true 40 hour work week,” explains Ross, “but that is our choice”

According to the district, the revisions to working conditions are to “provide more flexibility ... and supports for students, advisory periods, and teacher professional development and preparation times”. Ross worries that the proposed language will reduce her time available for classroom preparation, grading and lesson planning. “We really don’t know,” worries Ross. “We’re concerned that they will ask us to do more and more.”

Another hurdle the teachers will face is the change of process for evaluating and accrediting teachers education and experience. Traditionally, a teacher’s salary is based on their accreditations, years of experience and level of education. Teachers with advanced degrees or those that continue their education and increase their skills could count on qualifying for “horizontal movement” to higher pay levels. The current contract

proposal restructures this process and limits consideration of advanced education and training earned prior to employment as

without a contract. Since then, teachers and the district have been meeting but have made little progress.

Mediation will continue on Thursday, October 17th. If bargaining does not move forward then each side will have a short time to make one final proposal. After a 30-day cool off period, the district can implement all or part of their final proposal. At that point the teachers can choose to accept, continue bargaining or go on strike.

“We are hoping to apply pressure so the board will do what they said in 2011 and rebuild the trust,” said Brasseur.

The Medford School Board will meet again on the 21st of October. Teachers and supporters are asked to attend this meeting and to wear black in solidarity.

“We’re trying to have our voices heard... but there is a general feeling that the district is just going through the motions,” explains Ross. “There is not a lot of talking happening, that is what concerns me.”

Southern Oregon Rollergirls Halloween basher!

Start your Halloween festivities off right with the Southern Oregon Rollergirls!

On Saturday, October 26th, the Southern Oregon Rollergirls will be battling Sick Town’s DisOrderlies!

Bring your friends and family to the Medford Armory and show some love for the Southern Oregon Rollergirls!

Silent auction and costume contest during half-time!

Doors open at 6 pm and the bout starts at 7 pm at the Medford Armory.

The Armory is located at 1701 South Pacific Highway in Medford. Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door.

Southern Oregon Rollergirls is an all-female,full-contact flat track roller derby league based in the heart of Southern Oregon’s Rogue Valley. For more information visit www.sorollergirls.org.

Discussion

Rogue Community College Presents

A History on African Americans in Oregon

Monday, October 21st
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Medford Library
205 S. Central

Rogue Community College

is holding a free, public program to discuss the history of African Americans in Oregon, with Portland State University adjunct professor Waliadah Imarisha. Participants will discuss the state’s history of black exclusion and discrimination, and pose the questions “Why Aren’t There More Black People in Oregon?”.

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Homelessness in the USA: The cost of going to war?

BY CRYSTAL SLANZI,
FOR THE TRAUMA &
MENTAL HEALTH REPORT

For most of us, walking by a homeless person who is curled up on a tattered blanket, asking for spare change seems like a common enough occurrence. Our reactions may vary, with some choosing to avoid eye contact (because it's just plain easier), while others dig some change out of their pockets or purses. But most of us have no idea how these people turned out like this at all.

Imagine for a moment, the many things that would have to go wrong in your life to end up in such dire straits. You would need to lose your job, perhaps develop a debilitating illness, and most importantly, have all your family and friends turn their backs on you.

Now take that scenario, add that in recent years you have returned from the other side of the world, where you lived in extreme conditions, in constant threat of being shot at or blown up, fighting in a war for your country, returning home with lasting physical or emotional wounds. This, for too many war veterans, is a reality.

Unfortunately, war veterans in the United States are more likely to become homeless than any other group. A January 2009 survey in USA Today reported that 16% of war veterans end up homeless. Furthermore, they are 50% more likely to become homeless than Americans who have not fought in a war. In addition, individuals belonging to a minority group such as African-Americans or Hispanics are more likely to end up homeless as well. And so, African-American and Hispanic men account for 56% of all homeless veterans even though they only account for only about 28% of the U.S. population.

So why are war veterans more likely to become homeless than other Americans? In part, due to the long-term effects of



posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Roughly 20% of war veterans return home suffering from PTSD, which can occur in people who have been exposed to life-threatening or catastrophic events such as violent crime, war or natural disasters. Symptoms include insomnia, intense emotional reactions such as an increase in anxiety when reminded of the event, nightmares and flashbacks, a loss of interest in daily activities, and difficulty concentrating. These symptoms can be exacerbated by previous exposure to traumatic events, a lack of family support following the trauma, family history of mental illness, and a history of childhood physical or sexual abuse.

Many PTSD symptoms are thought of as “typical” reactions to overwhelming events, but what separates a “typical” reaction from PTSD is the intensity and persistence of the symptoms; for example, they often get worse, rather than better with time. PTSD can severely interfere with normal life functioning such as the ability to hold down a job or maintain healthy relationships with friends and family, which can result in an increased risk of homelessness.

In addition to suffering from PTSD, many in the military use drugs or alcohol in an attempt to cope with the extreme conditions they are in. Although many stop once conditions change, others

maintain their addictions even after returning home, often resulting in social problems such as alienation from friends and family, financial difficulties, and challenges finding and keeping employment.

Beyond the consequences inherent in substance abuse itself, if a soldier is caught using in certain contexts, they may face the prospect of dishonorable discharge, meaning that they get little or no support from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

While a sizeable number of war veterans become homeless, as seen in the statistics cited above, most still do not. Looking ahead, we need to better understand the factors that prevent homelessness in this group, as this can suggest ways to ameliorate the problem. Factors such as strong family support, no history of mental illness in the family, and support from the VA (such as affordable housing and counseling) all seem to help with successful reintegration into life back home.

Although homelessness is a social ill that is not limited to the military, given the untold risks taken by those who choose to serve, there seems to be something particularly cruel about a society that lets its soldiers suffer permanently from the consequences of being a soldier in the first place. We ask those who serve to give up a lot, we shouldn't be asking them to give up their futures as well.

Oregon Guard soldiers to close out America’s war in Afghanistan

VIA OREGONLIVE.COM

About 1,150 Oregon National Guard soldiers are scheduled to be among the last U.S. combat troops in Afghanistan at the end of next year, when the United States plans to turn the military mission over to the United Nations.

A headquarters company and two battalion-sized elements of the Clackamas-based 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team will leave Oregon in late spring or early summer of 2014 for weeks of training at Fort Hood, Texas, then fly to Afghanistan, said the brigade commander, Col. William Edwards.

“We’re planning for a nine-month, boots-on-the-ground deployment,” said Edwards, 45, of Albany. “Political decisions could affect that, but it doesn’t change what we do today, is what I tell my soldiers.”

Edwards said the 41st has been assigned three missions in Afghanistan: to provide a headquarters unit in Kabul, augmented by troops from other units; to provide base security in the Kabul area; and to train members of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police at Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul.

“I think they’re all going to be challenging missions,” said Edwards, who has previously deployed twice to Iraq as an Oregon National Guard officer. “I anticipate a lot of change between now and when we mobilize, and once we’re on the ground there.”

Since 2001, more than 11,000 Oregon troops have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, many of whom have served more than one tour.

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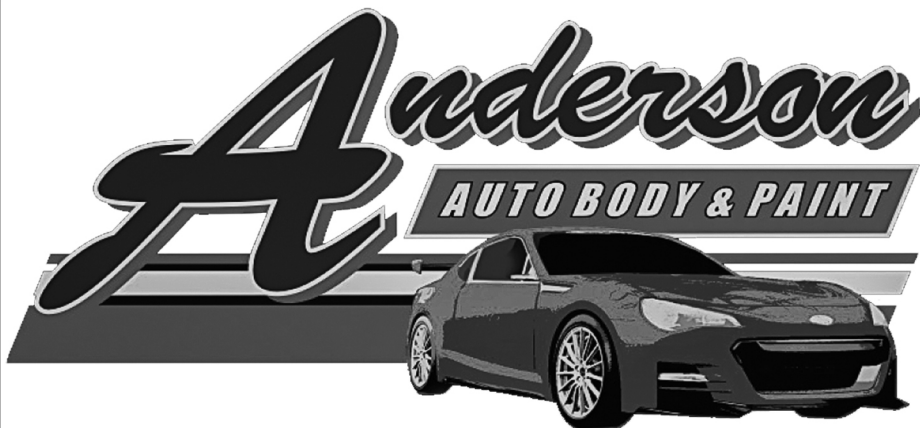
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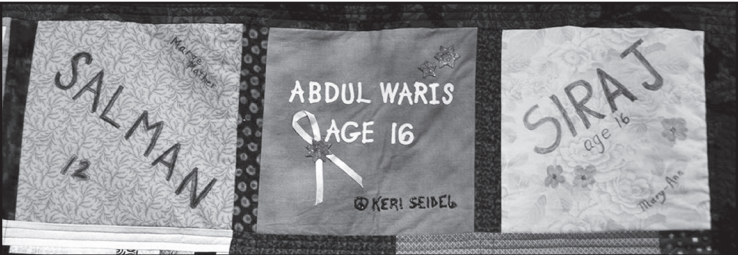
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The U.S. drones quilt project Keeper



These three quilt blocks were done by Ashland residents, Marge Mather, Keri Seidel and Mary Ann Jones, all members of the Ashland chapter of Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom.

Photo by Allen Hallmark

BY JASON HOUK

The US Drones Quilt project is a work of collective art designed to remind us that often the victims of drone attacks are people like us who are afraid, alone and innocent. Each square of the quilt is made by someone who puts their name and then the name of a civilian victim on a square of fabric. These are then sewn together to create a quilt panel that can be used in many ways: to raise awareness, for political advocacy, to connect us deeply to the victims of drone warfare and their families, to convert pain into beautiful, activist art. Drones are remotely detonated weapons. They can be used in the Middle East, for example, but detonated by someone in Nebraska. They reduce human

beings to dots on a screen, tiny blobs of light in the control room of an army base. The quilt restores humanity to those killed or maimed and reminds people that for every single victim of a drone there was a real person with loves, desires and a life. A group of women began the Drones Quilt Project in England to memorialize the victims of U.S. combat drones. Leah Bolger, retired Navy officer & former president of national Veterans For Peace, decided to launch the project here in the U.S. Anyone who is interested in creating a quilt block to sew into the next quilt should contact Leah Bolger at leahbolger@comcast.net and also check out the website, www.dronesquiltproject.wordpress.com.

CONTINUED FROM 1

premiums and out-of-pocket payments into a statewide, publicly funded, universal care agency, we would recover enough administrative costs to pay for treatment for uninsured people like Max without spending more money. We need to regain our health care dollars from insurance companies, not from our neighbors (deserving or undeserving). Universal health care is an essential tool to ensure each of us gets better care for less money. Who cares if freeloaders get care at our expense if by doing so the rest of us spend less and receive better care? So hop on the bandwagon for quality health care for everyone. The campaign to create publicly funded universal health care in Oregon is underway, spearheaded by Health Care for All-Oregon. To provide Max with the care he needs while making your own care less expensive, visit www.hcao.org. Learn more about how to become a better advocate for your family’s health care needs and play your own role in this vital process. Turning Oregon into a shining example of cost-effective comprehensive health care requires people like us looking after ourselves, our families, and our communities. Join us!

Samuel Metz is a private practice anesthesiologist, HCAO representative from the Portland chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program, and founding member of Mad As Hell Doctors.

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Meeting

The Rogue Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace includes veterans and civilians dedicated to peace. The local chapter was formed in 2008 and covers Jackson and Josephine Counties. RV Vets for Peace participate in local peace stands in public places, hold rallies, and march in local parades. Members have served in all branches of the military. Members regularly join forces with other peace and social justice groups. Monthly meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6 pm. For more information visit www.rv-vfp156.org or call chapter president Allen Hallmark at 541-897-0135.

What’s Next?

Health care coverage in Oregon after Obamacare

There will be a hosted dinner and discussion on health care reform with Rep. Peter Buckley and Mark Kellenbeck of Health Care for All Oregon

Citizens for Peace & Justice will host a program on health care reform beyond the Affordable Care Act. Rep. Buckley will discuss the prospects for further reform in the direction of universal, single payer coverage. Mark Kellenbeck, who chairs the Rogue Valley Chapter of Health Care for All Oregon will join Buckley.

RSVPs helpful. Contact Allen, hallmark3843@gmail.com.

Friday, October 18th
Dinner served at 6 PM., program begins at approximately 6:45 PM. at the Oregon Education Association building, 2495 South Pacific Hwy (Highway 99),

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The threat of Trans-Pacific Partnership to public health

BY IVEND HOLEN

Part 3 A Glimmer of Hope ??

With the secret Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiating process now winding down to its final stages, some optimism for opponents of this disastrous trade bill may be warranted, at last. Although the governments and over 600 corporate lobbyists negotiating this draconian trade agreement still don't want you to know what's in it, some of them issued cheery press releases congratulating themselves for the "progress" they made at the last round in Brunei last August. But you'll search in vain for any information on what "progress" they made, or even what the TPP negotiators are up to.

With the end of the 19th round of negotiations in Brunei in late August, the negotiators are ending their practice of "consultation", and are now holding secret unannounced meetings. In other words, not only is the text of the TPP to remain in secrecy, the continuing negotiations themselves are being kept secret.

President Obama had long planned to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Bali in early October to celebrate the conclusion of the TPP negotiations, but the intrusion of the shutdown of the government on Oct 1st by Tea Party Republicans helped torpedo the entire Asia trip, and he decided to send his war-mongering Sec of State, John Kerry, in his stead. But despite the efforts of the Administration, it appears virtually certain there will be no deal for Kerry or anybody else to sign in Bali, since a number of the 12 negotiating governments have balked at various provisions of the draft agreement, and the process of negotiation drags on.

The deepening secrecy that continues to shroud the provisions of TPP, and even the negotiations themselves, adds substance to the assertion of former

US Trade Representative Ron Kirk when he said that making the text public would raise such opposition that it "could make the deal impossible to sign". One example of the kinds of provisions being shielded from public view is the issue of "safe harbor" provisions, which provide exemptions to certain companies, or the products they produce, from being required to institute warnings about the significant adverse health consequences or dangers those products may have on the consumer. The provisions originally envisioned were to exempt tobacco products from this shield, given that several nations (including the US) already had such requirements written into their laws. But the enormous pressure and influence of big tobacco has apparently caused backpedaling on this issue, and with the shield now back in place for tobacco, the health of human populations are being sacrificed in third world countries.

If the TPP is "fast-tracked" through Congress as anticipated, it could result in lawsuits from the tobacco companies to have these warnings removed from their tobacco products even in the US. Since the decisions of the "trade court" supersede all national laws it could even conceivably result in the reversal of the decisions that found the tobacco companies liable for damages to the health of US citizens, and require various US states and individuals to repay the billions of dollars they had to pay to settle the anti-tobacco lawsuits of past decades.

Another provision of the TPP potentially affecting the health of human populations would outlaw the labeling of foods regarding its origin, including whether it was derived from genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Peru, and Vietnam currently have labeling laws requiring disclosure of GMOs in the food sold in their countries, but under the draft provision of this trade agreement

all signatory nations would be required to remove such labels. In the US the hard struggle to progress towards labeling GMOs would be over, since, under international law, the TPP provisions supersede any and all national laws that conflict with it. The state of Oregon just withdrew the authority for individual counties or other governmental bodies to regulate GMOs in the state, but the TPP will withdraw the authority of the state of Oregon – or even the United States – to regulate GMOs – even if they are definitively and scientifically shown to be hazardous to human health.

Some people and nations believe that high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is detrimental to human health, causing changes and deterioration to the human liver like those experienced by alcoholics. But under the provisions of NAFTA similar to those embodied in the TPP, the three signatory NAFTA nations: the US, Canada, and Mexico are not permitted to discriminate against this hazardous product. The Mexican government, in an effort to keep HFCS from undercutting the price of natural sugar, taxed the product from 2002 to 2007, but was sued and, earlier this year, forced to pay over \$100 million in compensation to Cargill and other HFCS producers by NAFTA's trade tribunal panel. The toxic health effects of HFCS that result in diabetes and diseased livers could not even be introduced as evidence before the court.

Australia, New Zealand, and Japan have differing healthcare systems (much like US Medicare) that provide subsidized near-universal hospital and physician care for all their citizens. Under the TPP these systems could be at risk. The TPP is designed to protect the private medical industries and insurers, and give them greater power to use their wealth and to use the rigged trade tribunal court system to protect their profits. Margaret Flowers, of

Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) has written(1) that the TPP, "will undermine health systems in the US and abroad. High prices could bankrupt public health systems like those in Japan and Australia (ranked among the top in the world). Under the TPP, it is also possible that Japan's regulation of health insurance which includes controlling coverage, prices and profits would qualify it as an SOE (State Owned Enterprise) that has unfair advantages. This could open the door for private multinational health insurance corporations to enter TPP signatory countries and demand access and that regulations are loosened".

In summary, the approval and implementation of this trade agreement could have disastrous effects on both the the health and the economic well-being of the populations of the United States and other Pacific Rim countries that sign on to it. Oregon has unique power and authority to influence the eventual disposition of it through its senior Senator, Ron Wyden, who chairs the committee through which the agreement must first pass, and he has not yet declared his position on the TPP. Obviously, he is under enormous pressure from the Obama Administration, which has tied its reputation, in large part, to the passage of the TPP. All those who have read the article this far should take the further step of contacting Senator Wyden via phone or email, and then urge him vigorously to oppose it, or, at the minimum, to oppose Fast-Track legislation which could deny any hearings, debates or amendments to the Agreement prior to its passage.

The Oregon Fair Trade Campaign (OFTC) works in coalition with labor, environmental and human rights organizations across the state to fight for fair trade policies. If you would like your organization to join in the effort to defeat the TPP they will do a presentation to your board or steering committee.

Event Responding to injustice: A community conversation with MRG

In the wake of a Supreme Court decision that gutted the Voting Rights Act and a deeply concerning verdict in the trial of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin, the McKenzie River Gathering (MRG) Foundation is hosting a community conversation in Ashland to discuss:

- What are the connections between these seemingly separate events?
- Why should these setbacks in our quest for justice matter to Oregonians?
- How do we channel our confusion, frustration, passion, and even anger into a broad movement for social change?

The event will be Wednesday, October 30, 2013 from 6:30pm - 8:30pm at the Ashland Public Library, Gresham Room, 410 Siskiyou Blvd. in Ashland.

Joining this community conversation will be Virginia Camberos of Rogue Valley Oregon Action, Shaun Franks, a student at SOU, and Sharon Gary-Smith with MRG Foundation.

The MRG Foundation has been funding social justice groups since 1976.

For more information call 503-289-1517.



Contact Ivend Holen at idholen@ccountry.net or (541) 779-5392.

Part 1 of this article can be found in the July 2013, RVCP. Part 2 can be found in the September 2013 issue of RVCP. The complete series can be found at rvcommunitypress.com



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On “solving” poverty Labor needs to recalibrate and fight

BY MATT BRUENIG
MATTBRUENIG.COM

When you say you want to “solve” poverty, you generally assume poverty just exists as an independent-from-policy phenomenon and that we are then going to tackle it with policy interventions. So we talk about it as if it’s akin to someone being trapped in a burning house that we then come from the outside of to rescue.

But that is not true. Poverty doesn’t just happen. Poverty is created. It is a consequence of policy. We have in our society a set of policies that govern the distribution of income. That set of policies distributes income very unevenly such that a lot of people have very little and are thus impoverished. Poverty is not a thing that just exists that we then try to solve with policy. It is a thing that is brought into existence by our (distributive) policy in the first place. In the burning house metaphor, policy sets the house on fire.

What I am saying is that we should stop setting houses on fire. And what people who don’t focus on distribution are saying is that we should keep setting houses on fire and try to come up with better ways to rescue people from burning homes. It’s insane.

So it’s not so much that I want to “solve” poverty; rather it is that I want to stop making it happen to begin with. But since we live in a world where even top educated people are blinded to the fact that our current set of distributive policies aren’t written into the physical structure of the universe, the “solutions” (there’s the word again) we get operate on the assumption that our distributive institutions just exist standing alone as permanent, neutral constants. This is why, I think, we get such comically bad proclamations like “only education can solve poverty.”

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Telling the stories of our community is something that we are passionate about here at RVCP, but we need your help. We rely on our advertisers, subscribers and supporters in order to “keep us in ink”. We can’t do it without your help. Would you please consider donating a few dollars if you

can? We’ll put it to good use. Please visit rvcommunitypress.com and you’ll find a Paypal button to donate via credit card or you can send a check to RVCP 258 A Street #1, Ashland, OR 97520. We’d like to thank all of the folks who have helped so far.



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BY ANN ROBERTSON
AND BILL LEUMER
VIA PORTLAND IMC

While the U.S. media has been obsessed with the in-fighting between Democrats and Republicans, as well as the recent government shutdown and the global/domestic ramifications of a possible government default, little attention has been paid to a looming disaster confronting working people: Obama is again threatening to cut “entitlement” programs, meaning Social Security and Medicare.

Here is how he put it in a recent CNBC interview in the course of answering questions: “But we still have some challenges in terms of our long-term health care spending on Medicare in particular.” And later in the interview he added: “It is important for us to deal with our long-term entitlement spending.” Knowing that these cuts are incredibly unpopular among the vast majority, Obama chose oblique language rather than being straightforward, as is typical among politicians. But we know from past admissions on his part that he is talking about cuts.

In order to appreciate the significance of Obama’s current threat it is helpful to keep in mind the larger, surrounding context. The Democrats, for example, without putting up a fight, have already made significant concessions at the expense of working people around the current budget. They signaled their willingness to accept the austere level of funding proposed by the right-wing Republicans – roughly 18 percent below what the Democrats originally proposed. This means that there will be less money available to fund public education and infrastructure projects, both of which would benefit working people, the first in terms of enhancing public education, the second in terms of construction jobs.

But the even larger context within which these events must be framed concerns the growing inequalities in wealth, which are surging. According to The New York Times, in the 1990s the richest 1 percent received 45 percent of all new income; during the next decade they received 65 percent. And now it has jumped to 95 percent.

With wealth being concentrated more and more at the top, the rich can use their vast resources to lobby government officials for policies that make the rich even richer. And not surprisingly, they have done exactly this by convincing politicians to lower their tax rates.

As Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, reported, for example: “From the 1940s until 1980, the top income-tax rate on the highest earners in America was at least 70 percent. In the 1950s, it was 91 percent. Now it’s 35 percent. Even if you include deductions and credits, the rich are paying a far lower share of their incomes in taxes than at any time since World War II. The estate tax (which hits only the top 2 percent) also has been slashed. In 2000 it was 55 percent and kicked in after \$1 million.”

Rather than trying to reduce inequalities in wealth, which undermine democracy and shred the social and moral fabric that holds people together, Obama is proposing to throw fuel on the fire with his entitlement cuts. He refuses to raise income taxes on the rich, as he indicated in the same interview. He is prepared to ignore the fact that the poverty rate among senior citizens is on the rise, thanks in part to their increased medical expenses. And despite the fact that Social Security is a major factor keeping many seniors above the poverty line, Obama is prepared to cut both it and Medicare. This is a reflection of the power that the 1 percent can wield, thanks to their vast financial resources.

In other words, the rich have declared class war on the rest of us. While Democrats give plenty of speeches in support of programs and policies that would support working people, their actions speak louder about where they stand in this war.

Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO, whose official task is to defend working people, at best is sending mixed messages, and at worst has abandoned its members and joined the opposition. On its blog it has announced: “Working people need to bring our own pressure. Our message is clear – repeal the sequester... No cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Protect food aid for the

poor. And create jobs and raise hundreds of billions of dollars to invest in our future by ending all tax subsidies for outsourcing.” (September 30, 2013)


Yet just a few days later, the same AFL-CIO author announced, after calling for higher taxes on the rich and after denouncing the proposed cuts to Social Security and Medicare being peddled by “extremist” Republicans, whom he describes as deeply dependent on Wall Street money: “And that’s why people need to tell the president, ‘stand tall, we are with you.’” Significantly, the author failed to mention Obama has rejected higher income taxes on the rich and has on numerous occasions expressed willingness to cut Social Security and Medicare, and is also “deeply dependent” on Wall Street money.

Here is how The New York Times described Obama’s relation with Wall Street (June 12, 2011, “Obama Seeks to Win Back Wall St. Cash”):

“A few weeks before announcing his re-election campaign, President Obama convened two dozen Wall Street executives, many of them longtime donors, in the White House’s Blue Room... The event, organized by the Democratic National Committee, kicked off an aggressive push by Mr. Obama to win back the allegiance of one of his most vital sources of campaign cash — in part by trying to convince Wall Street that his policies, far from undercutting the investor class, have helped bring banks and financial markets back to health... And Mr. Obama will return to New York this month to dine with bankers, hedge fund executives and private equity investors at the Upper East Side restaurant Daniel.”

With the most cursory glance at all the financial relations between Wall Street, Obama, and the Democratic Party, it becomes patently obvious that the AFL-CIO has embraced a completely self-defeating strategy: support the very people who are attacking you. There is no acknowledgement by the AFL-CIO that Obama and the Democrats are also on the take when it comes to Wall Street money. And there can be little wonder that working people

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On the street

BY KAREN JEFFERY

Whereby our roving reporter takes timely questions to people on the street.

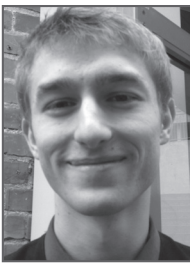
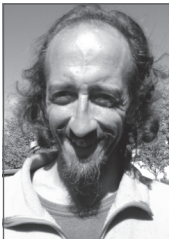
This week I stopped folks all over Ashland to ask: Are you happy with things these days, or do you envision or wish for something different?

Aaron Yoscovitch (Transient & Homeless Outdoorsman.)

Bigger heads and government need to accept options to end homelessness, pull their heads out of their asses and allow things like tent cities. Also we all need to treat each other better. I've been laughed at and scorned just for being poor. The rich need to wake up and do more. People are hurting.

Buck Hickman (Jacksonville. Assistant Manager, Varsity Theatre.)

As far as my own life goes, I'm content. But only for now. I'm an aspiring filmmaker. I've made two shorts with a friend. I'm a writer, stage actor, and would love to direct. I love this theatre, and I love my job. Hence my contentment (broad smile).



Allen Hallmark (Talent - recently relocated from Grants Pass. Retired criminal defense investigator for Federal Public Defender's office & former newspaper reporter for the Medford Mail Tribune)

As far as my personal life is concerned, I'm pretty content. With the national & international situation, I am extremely worried about how much control huge corporations, mega-banks & billionaires exert over our government and the governments of many nations around the world. Their greed & insistence on maintaining the oil-gas-coal-and nuclear-based economy, combined with the conflicts caused by religious fanatics - be they Muslim, Christian, Hindu or others - make it extremely difficult for our planet's environment, contributing to global warming, constant warfare, and cultural intolerance.

I try to keep in my mind & heart a vision of our future in which our species has learned to live in peace through conflict resolution & diplomacy and to live more simply, utilizing solar, wind & geothermal energy that is totally renewable. In this idyllic future, global warming will be brought under control; water will be used and shared wisely for humans, fish and wildlife; no one will go hungry who wishes to eat; and mankind will live in harmony with all other creatures...and will no longer be considered a cancer on the planet.



Daniel Melendez (Ashland. Pinehurst Inn. Cook & kitchen.)

Things are pretty ok. I wish we all could move more consciously to recycling and saving resources. Ashland's okay as a city, but needs to focus beyond downtown and work more on the homeless situation. Some local jobs would help.



Keri Seidel (Ashland. Activist)

I do envision something different. I'm disheartened but see so many working hard to make things better, so I'm hopeful. We need more compassion for each other, the earth, others life forms. And our actions spring from that compassion.



Karen Jeffery is a freelance writer, publicist, photographer, publicist, activist, and resource unlimited. Reach her at mauitutu@gmail.com.



USA Surveillance State
Street Art by Banksy

Volunteers Needed:

Uncle Foods Diner at the Methodist Church, Ashland. Tuesdays, 3-6:30pm. Cooks, servers, clean up needed. Contact Ruth at info@peacehouse.net

Occupy Medford General Assembly

October 26th
At the Medford Public Library in the Adams Room
10 AM - 12 Noon

Event

The Award winning documentary film
"Gen Silent"



This film focuses on LGBT people in long term care facilities. In the United States, there are almost 38 million LGBT Americans over 65. This will nearly double by 2030. Fifty percent of LGBT elders live alone, and four out of five LGBT elders say that they don't trust the health - care system. Fifty percent of nursing home workers said their fellow workers would be intolerant of LGBT people.

Tuesday, October 22 at 6:30pm at the Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
87 Fourth Street, Ashland (Corner of C & 4th Streets)

The film is sponsored by Rogue Valley LGBT Elders, AARP Diversity Advisory Council, and Social Justice and Action Committee of the RV Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Labor

CONTINUED FROM 11

have suffered so many defeats during the past four decades with this kind of incoherent strategy.

Until organized labor takes a clear stand in favor of working people in this raging class war, as opposed to trying to straddle some inconsistent middle position, working people will continue to watch their standard of living decline while the 1 percent continue their all-out offensive.

We should insist that organized labor take an unambiguous position in defense of working people, act independently of

the politicians by mobilizing working people and their community allies, and stage massive demonstrations demanding that the government raise taxes on the rich, reject any cuts to Social Security and Medicare, create a federal jobs program that would put millions back to work, and allocate more money to education and social programs so that poverty can be completely eliminated.

Real wars require that two opposed sides battle each other. Thus far, thanks to organized labor's default, we have been experiencing a massacre.

Southern Oregon Climate Action NOW!

SOCAN Special Presentation
Tuesday, October 29, 2013
6:00 - 6:30pm, Adams Room
Medford Library

The Special Topic presentation provides an opportunity to learn about some aspect of Climate Change. This month

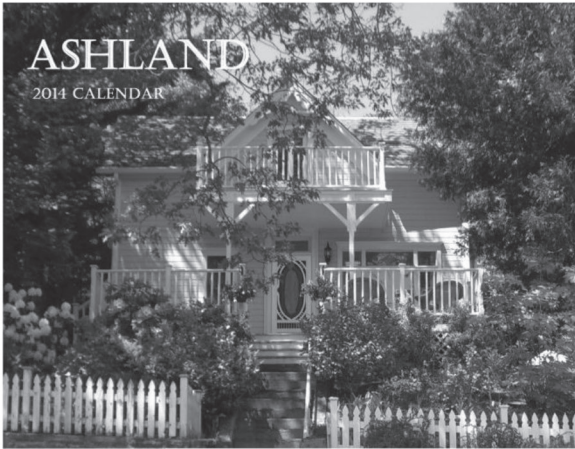
Dr. Ray Seidler, Retired Professor of Microbiology (OSU), will discuss 'GMO Products and Climate Change: A multifaceted disaster.'

General Meeting
6:30 - 8:00pm
Large Community Room

The program begins with an overview of activities within existing focus groups, standing teams, and projects. Participants are then invited to join a team and work to Take Bold Action to address Climate Change.

For more information visit: <http://socan.info/>

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